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## SHEKHAR AND LEAVEN IN MOSAIC OFFERINGS.

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An argument for two kinds of *yayin* and two kinds of *shekhar* is drawn from the prohibition of *leaven* in offerings by fire unto the Lord. This prohibition is stated in Exod. xxxiv. 25: "Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven," and Lev. ii. 11: "No meat offering which ye shall bring unto the Lord shall be made with leaven; for ye shall burn no leaven nor any honey in any offering of the Lord made by fire." But in Num. xxviii. 7 it is written: "The drink offering thereof shall be the fourth part of an hin for the one lamb: in the holy place shalt thou pour out a drink offering of *shekhar* unto the Lord." Assuming that the process of *leavening* and of *fermentation* is effected by the same principle, that this fact was known to the sacred writers, and that this principle or cause was called by them *leaven*, it is inferred that there was in reality an unleavened and a leavened *yayin* and *shekhar*. Let us test the correctness of this assumption, and the soundness of this argument. To do this we propose the following queries:

1. Is the principle of vinous fermentation ever referred to in the Bible as *leaven*? If it is so named by the sacred writers, we ought to have the passages at command and be able to show it clearly. But if it is never so named, there is some reason to doubt whether the sacred writers knew that the cause of fermentation in wine was identical with leaven.

2. Is wine itself, under any of its names or forms, ever spoken of in the Scriptures as being either *leavened* or *unleavened*? Meal and dough and bread are thus characterized, but we do not know of any place where these terms are applied to wine or strong drink. Why this difference, if leavening and fermenting were known to be equivalent processes, one in solids and the other in liquids?

3. Is there any scriptural evidence that *wine* was removed from the houses of Israelites during the passover? The passover occurred at the beginning of harvest in the spring, before the new wine was ready for use—indeed months before. There must therefore have been old wine, and often an abundance of it, in Jewish houses at the passover—unless it was carefully removed. But we know of no evidence in the Bible, or in Josephus or Philo, that it was removed on account of that festival. But if it could be shown that wine was removed from Jewish houses at the passover, it would not follow that it was removed because it was unwholesome.

4. Is there any biblical evidence that *unleavened* bread was more wholesome or nutritious than *leavened* bread? If there is, let it be produced. We know of none. And, if we assume that the Mosaic legislation was intended to conserve the health of the people, we can hardly suppose that unleavened bread would be prescribed for a week only during the year, nor can we account for the gift of leavened bread to the priests as food (Lev. xxiii., 17-20). The fact certainly is that unleavened bread is harder and less wholesome than leavened. If leavening is fermentation, then fermentation improves the quality of certain substances for

the uses which they were intended to serve. But dietetic considerations were not supreme in the Mosaic ritual. Indeed, the only reason distinctly assigned by the Old Testament for the use of unleavened bread at the passover is thus stated (Deut. xvi., 3): “Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it [the paschal lamb]; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life.”

5. Is not Num. xxviii. 7 to be reconciled with Exod. xxxiv. 25 and Lev. ii. 11, by observing that *wine is never thought of or spoken of as leavened* by the sacred writers? Or, if we make a distinction between *yayin* and *shekhar*, is not the first passage to be reconciled with the others by observing that *shekhar* is never spoken of as *leavened*? This surely is the obvious way of bringing the different passages into accord, or rather, of seeing that there is no appearance of contradiction between them. “But if this method of explaining the passages be adopted, we lose the argument for two kinds of *yayin* and of *shekhar* which is derived from the prohibition of leaven in sacrifice.” Undoubtedly; but our object is not to get arguments for total abstinence (*in which we believe*), but to interpret the Word of God faithfully.

What then is the proper meaning of *shekhar*? It is used twenty-three times in the Old Testament. Twelve times it is represented by *sikera* in the Septuagint (viz., in Lev. x. 9; Num. vi. 32; xxviii. 7; Deut. xiv. 26; xxix. 6; Isa. v. 11, 22; xxiv. 9; xxviii. 7<sup>2</sup>; xxix. 9). Five times it is translated *μέθυσμα* (viz., in Judg. xiii. 4, 7, 14; 1 Sam. i. 15; Mic. ii. 11); twice, *μέθη* (viz., in Prov. xx. 1 and Isa. xxviii. 7); once, *οἶνος* (Ps. lxix. 13); and three times (Prov. xxxi. 4, 6; Isa. lvi. 12) it is not represented at all, because the Hebrew verses are not given in the Septuagint.

In the Latin Vulgate it is represented by *sicera* five times, by *ebrietas* eleven times, by *omne quod ineibriare potest* four times, by *vinum* twice (Num. xxviii. 7; Ps. lxix. 13), and by *potio* once.

In the Revised English Version it is every-where translated strong drink, save in Ps. lxix. 13, where “drinkers of *shekhar*” are called simply “drunkards.”

But a more detailed statement is needed. In Lev. x. 9 Aaron and his sons are forbidden to drink *yayin* or *shekhar* when going, or about to go, into the Tabernacle. In Num. vi., 3 the man or woman who takes a Nazarite’s vow is forbidden to drink *yayin* or vinegar of *yayin*, *shekhar* or vinegar of *shekhar*. In Judg. xiii. 4, 7, 14, the mother of Samson is forbidden to drink *yayin* or *shekhar*, or to eat any unclean thing, because her promised son was to be a Nazarite to God from the womb. In 1 Sam. i. 15, Hannah, when accused of intoxication by Eli, says: “I have drunk neither *yayin* nor *shekhar*, but I poured out my soul unto the Lord.” In Ps. lxix. 12 it is written: “They that sit in the gate talk of me, and I am the song of drinkers of *shekhar*.” In Prov. xx. 1: “*Yayin* is a mocker, *shekhar*, a brawler.” In Prov. xxxi. 4, 6: “It is not for kings to drink *yayin*; nor for princes to say, Where is *shekhar*? ” “Give *shekhar* unto him that is ready to perish, and *yayin* to the bitter in soul.” In Isa. v. 11, 22: “Woe unto them that rise up early in the morning, that they may follow *shekhar*; that tarry late into the night, till *yayin* inflame them.” “Woe unto them that are mighty to drink *yayin*, and men of strength to mingle *shekhar*.” In xxiv. 9: “They shall not drink *yayin* with a song; *shekhar* shall be bitter to them that drink it.” In

xxviii. 7: "These also have erred through *yayin*, and through *shekhar* have gone astray; the priest and the prophet have erred through *shekhar*, they are swallowed up of *yayin*, they are gone astray through *shekhar*." In xxix. 9: "They are drunken, but not with *yayin*; they stagger, but not with *shekhar*." In lvi. 12: "Come ye, say they, I will fetch *yayin*, and we will fill ourselves with *shekhar*: and to-morrow shall be as this day." And in Mic.: "If a man, walking in wind and falsehood do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of *yayin* and *shekhar*; he shall even be the prophet of this people."

In every one of these twenty cases the meaning *strong drink* suits the connection, and may be used in translating *shekhar*, without suggesting to any reader confusion of thought. In most of them an intoxicating drink is *supposed* by the context. The remaining three passages are as follows: In Num. xxviii. 7, *shekhar* is specified as a daily drink offering to the Lord. Josephus says that this offering was of *wine*. The Latin Vulgate and the Authorized English Version translate *shekhar* "vinum" and "strong wine." In Deut. xiv. 26, it is said that a Jew going up to the sanctuary with a tithe of his cattle and grain in money, may "bestow his money for whatsoever his soul desires, for oxen, or for sheep, or for *yayin*, or for *shekhar*, that he may eat there before the Lord, and rejoice with all his house." And in Deut. xxix., 6, the Lord says to the children of Israel: "Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk *yayin* or *shekhar*: that ye might know that I am the Lord your God." In these instances *shekhar* seems to be looked upon as a common beverage, prized by the people, and not necessarily injurious. But until we know that stimulating drinks were regarded by the sacred writers as evil, and only evil, we cannot be sure that *shekhar* means in any of these passages an unfermented liquor. No particular kind of *shekhar* is pointed out. If there were two kinds in use, one fermented and the other unfermented, no hint is offered of this fact.

But there is another Hebrew noun from the same verbal root as *shekhar*, viz., *shikkâron* (ă as in father), which occurs twice in Ezekiel (viz., xxiii. 33 and xxxix. 19). The former passage reads thus: "Thou shalt be filled with *shikkâron* and sorrow, with the cup of astonishment and desolation, with the cup of thy sister Samaria;" and the latter thus: "Ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood unto *shikkâron*" (RV., till ye be drunken).

An adjective *shikkor* from the same root is found thirteen times in the Old Testament (viz., in 1 Sam. i. 18; xxv. 36; 1 Kgs. xvi. 9; xx. 16; Job xii. 25; Ps. cvii. 27; Prov. xxvi. 9; Isa. xxiv. 20; xxviii. 1, 3; Jer. xxiii. 9; Joel i. 5), and in every case is translated in the Septuagint, Vulgate and English Version by words signifying drunken, or drunkard. The adjective always means drunken.

The verb *shâkar* occurs fifteen times; and in all but two of the places where it is used, it evidently means to drink to intoxication. The passages are Gen. ix. 21; Deut. xxxii. 42; 1 Sam. i. 14; 2 Sam. xi. 13; Cant. v. 1; Isa. xxix. 9; xl ix. 26; li. 21; lxiii. 6; Jer. xxv. 27; xl viii. 26; li. 7, 39, 57; Lam. iv. 21; Hab. ii. 15; Hag. i. 6. In two of the passages (viz., Cant. v. 1 and Hag. i. 6) the verb may have a slightly weaker sense, viz., to drink to exhilaration. But the stronger and usual sense may be the one intended in these places, as well as in all the rest.

In view of the use of the verb, the adjective and the noun, we do not see how any impartial scholar can deny that the Revisers were right in translating *shekhar*

"strong drink" (i. e., drink that would intoxicate if taken in sufficient quantity) in Num. xxviii. 7, as well as in all other places, except Ps. lxix. 12, where "drinkers of *shekhar*" are called simply "drunkards." Perhaps it would have been better, for the sake of uniformity, to render literally "drinkers of strong drink" in this passage.

From Exod. xxix. 40; Lev. xxiii. 13 and Josephus Ant. iii. 4, it appears that a libation of wine (one-fourth of a hin) was daily offered to the Lord. Josephus appears to say that this drink offering was poured round the foot of the altar of burnt offerings. Many scholars suppose that it was poured on the altar or on the sacrificial animal lying on the altar, and especially because Exod. xxx. 9 forbids it to be poured *on the altar of incense*. If this libation of wine was identical with the libation of *shekhar* (which is almost certain), it follows that *shekhar* was a designation sometimes given to wine of a certain quality, that is, to "strong wine," and therefore the rendering of Num. xxviii. 7 is substantially correct. Should any one still insist that the *yayin* employed in sacrifice was unfermented grape juice, it is pertinent to ask why it was not called *terosh* instead of *yayin*, since those who believe there were two kinds of wine then in use, namely, unfermented and fermented, insist that *terosh* always meant the former, while *yayin* often meant the latter? Why was not the law made unambiguous when this could have been so easily done? Surely the asserters of the two-wine theory ought to be surprised that the material of the daily drink offering was denominated *yayin* and *shekhar*, but never *terosh*.

Let us now return to the questions concerning *leaven*, and examine the statements of Scripture in relation to the use and effect of this substance. Two different words are translated "leaven" in the Old Testament, viz., *seor*, meaning by derivation *to expand, to swell up, to ferment*, spoken of dough, and *chamets*, meaning by derivation *to be sharp, tart, sour*. The former, however, is used as a noun, the latter as an adjective; the former signifies "leaven," the latter "leavened."

The former (*seor*) occurs in Exod. xii. 15, 19; xiii. 7; Lev. ii. 11; Deut. xvi. 4, and in every instance is properly translated "leaven." The Septuagint version is *ζιμη*, the Vulgate, *fermentum* (once *fermentatum*). *Seor* is nowhere spoken of in connection with wine or strong drink or indeed any beverage. The material of it is supposed to have been commonly "sour dough."

The latter (*chamets*) occurs in Exod. xii. 15 (cf. 19, 20, *machmetseth*); xiii. 3, 7; xxiii. 18; xxxiv. 25; Lev. ii. 11; vi. 10 (Eng. Vers. vi. 17); vii. 13; xxiii. 17; Amos iv. 5. The word means in every instance *leavened bread* or *dough*. It is an adjective, though often translated *ζιμη* in the Septuagint. It will repay us to look at every one of these texts with a view to accepting or rejecting the statement that *chamets* signifies *leavened bread* or *dough*, and not leavened *yayin* or *shekhar*. The first, Exod. xii. 15, reads: "Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven (*seor*) out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread (*chamets*) from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel." Compare verses 19, 20: "Seven days shall be no leaven (*seor*) found in your houses; for whosoever eateth that which is *leavened*, that soul shall be cut off.... Ye shall eat nothing leavened: in all your habitations shall ye eat *unleavened bread*." The second place is Exod. xiii. 3, 7: "There shall no leavened bread (*chamets*) be eaten." "*Unleavened bread* shall be eaten throughout the seven days; and there shall no *leavened bread* (*chamets*) be seen with thee, neither shall there be *leaven* (*seor*) seen with thee."

The third is Exod. xxiii. 18: “Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with (or upon) *leavened bread (chamets)*. ” The fourth is Exod. xxxiv. 25, and is like the preceding. The fifth is Lev. ii. 11: “No *meal offering*, which ye shall offer unto the Lord, shall be made with leaven (i. e., leavened bread, *chāmets*): for ye shall bring no leaven (*seor*), nor any honey, as an offering by fire unto the Lord.” The sixth is Lev. vi. 10 (Eng. Ver. vi. 17): “And that which is left thereof shall Aaron and his sons *eat*: it shall be *eaten without leaven* in a holy place: in the court of the tent of meeting they shall eat it. It shall not be baked with leaven” (i. e., leavened, *chamets*). The seventh is Lev. vii. 13: “With cakes of *leavened* bread he shall offer his oblation with the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving.” This leavened bread appears to have been eaten by the priests (verse 16), though it was a part of the thank offering. The eighth is Lev. xxiii. 17: “Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth parts (of an ephah): they shall be of fine flour, they shall be baken with leaven (i. e., *leavened*) for first fruits unto the Lord.” The ninth is Amos iv. 5: “And offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving of that which is leavened (*mechāmets*), and proclaim free-will offerings and publish them.”

In all but three of these instances the reference to bread or meal is in some way expressed, and in three instances where it is not expressed there is *absolutely no reason* to suppose a reference to any thing different. Including the two passages where the participle is used instead of the adjective, there are eight cases in which bread or flour is in some way expressed, and three where it is not, but where it must certainly be understood.

If we compare the use of the verb *chamets* with the use of the noun and adjective, farther light will be gained. The verb occurs in Exod. xii. 34, 39: “And the people took their dough before *it was leavened*, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders”....“And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not *leavened*.” In Ps. lxxiii. 21: “For my heart was embittered” or soured (rather than *grieved*), “and I was pricked in my reins.” In Isa. lxiii. 1: “Who is this that cometh from Edom, crimsoned of garments from Bozrah?” The Greeks, says Gesenius, speak of a *χρῶμα ὄξυ*. In Hos. vii. 4: “They are all adulterers; they are as an oven heated by the baker; he ceaseth to stir (the fire), from the kneading of the dough until it be leavened.” In Ps. vii. 4 the present participle *chomets* is translated *cruel man* (= acid, sour man).

From this root, finally, is the word *chomets*, translated “vinegar.” It appears in Num. vi. 3; Ruth ii. 14; Ps. lxix. 22; Prov. x. 26; xxv. 20. This word applies to liquids, but it is nowhere found in such connections as to imply that it was a pleasant beverage, used freely as a drink. It was neither exhilarating nor intoxicating, as used by the ancient Israelites. As drink it was bitter, sour, unpalatable, though it was sometimes used as a relish. Of the Nazarite it is said: “He shall drink no vinegar of wine, or vinegar of strong drink.” Boaz says to Ruth: “Come hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar.” The Psalmist puts these words into the mouth of the righteous sufferer: “They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” And there are two Proverbs, one: “As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him;” and the other: “As one that taketh off a garment in cold weather, (and as) vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart.” Plainly

then this word is never used in the Holy Scriptures to denote any product of vinous fermentation.

But the Rev. J. M. Van Buren blames the translators and revisers of the English Bible for rendering *shekhar* in Num. xxviii. 7 "strong wine" or "strong drink." Though he lays down the rule, followed in this article, that "if a man makes a dictionary of the Bible, he has no authority but the Bible itself" (*The National Temperance Advocate*, March, 1886, p. 35), he makes what use he can of extra-biblical evidence. For in a previous number of *The National Temperance Advocate* (February, 1886, p. 19) he condemns the translators of the Common Version as follows: "The words 'strong wine' are only *a fiction* of the translators; they are not in the original Hebrew....Leaven is ferment, and ferment makes 'strong wine,' [and so] is forbidden. An awful responsibility, knowing-ly to quote this deception. We have a true and proper presentation of Num. xxviii. 7 in the Septuagint Greek of the Old Testament, made three hundred years before Christ, by learned Jewish scholars, while these offerings were made daily. They did not see 'strong wine' in the text....They simply transferred the Hebrew word *shekhar*, with a slight change for euphony, into *sikera*. If this was used instead of wine, the law required, as it did the wine, that it should be unfermented. Palm wine was *shekhar*; it is now and always has been used fresh."

In another passage he thus writes in respect to *sikera*: "This drink was de-  
rived from many sources. The juice of the palm-tree, or palm-wine, was, and still is, used fresh, in Eastern countries. Sikera was also expressed from various fruits; it was made from barley, from steeped raisins and dates....This *shekhar*, or *sikera*, made from barley, in its first, unfermented state, was what we now call *sweetwort*. It is a pleasant, nutritious drink; as malt, it is put up as a food for invalids. This liquid, when fermented, is intoxicating; and, with hops now added, makes beer. *Sikera of any kind was not released from the law*, which forbade 'leaven,' or ferment, in that which was poured upon the altar. A shocking im-  
position was practised when the Translators called this 'strong wine.'" (*National Temperance Advocate*, March, 1886, p. 35.)

Can any thing be more oracular or worthless than this? How does Mr. Van Buren know what the authors of the Septuagint Version understood by *sikera*? How does he know that palm-wine was called *shekhar*, or that *shekhar* or *sikera* "was made from barley, and was what is now called *sweetwort*?" Is the Bible his teacher in these things? According to a late edition of Webster's Unabridged Dictionary *sweetwort* is "any plant of a sweet taste." Any plant of a sweet taste is *sikera* then! And this is scholarship rebuking the translators and revisers of the English Bible! The cause of temperance deserves better advocacy than is found in these articles of *The National Temperance Advocate*.